

member to disease, workplace mishap, or any of the other misfortunes that threatened nineteenth century Montrealers. They demonstrate, through their careful demographic research, that the contours of the family as an institution were flexible enough to give Montrealers a variety of strategic options to deal with the challenges posed by social and economic uncertainty. These strategies, though, were not devised without external pressures. When young men and women made decisions about how to organize their lives, they were being coaxed and cajoled by parents, relatives, neighbours, religious and community leaders – a reminder that historians need to be mindful of the overlapping communication networks that influenced individuals.

Peopling the North American City also addresses important questions about the relationship between people and the urban environment, and about the role that cities played in shaping the migratory experience. Olson and Thornton push us to think of Montreal as “an unending construction site, a flawed polity, a habitat scandalously imperfect, and a place in which it was impossible to stand still” (p.364). Urban society presented the migrant with a wide array of both penalties and rewards. While life in nineteenth century Montreal threatened migrants with dangerous work, low wages, cramped living arrangements, and epidemic disease, it also offered opportunities unimaginable in the rural communities of Ireland, the British Isles, and British North America that these migrants left behind. The exhaustive research carried out by Olson and Thornton in notarial archives, municipal tax rolls, the census, and city directories (to name only a few of the sources that their project tapped), demonstrate how Montrealers from the popular classes formed tight kinship communities in the urban neighbourhoods where they resided and slowly – yet doggedly – accumulated capital in the form of real estate, work equipment, and household furnishings.

Historians are currently in the midst of grappling with the possibilities that various digital resources continue to present to us. Methodological approaches in social history in particular are being rethought as digital tools that make it possible to work creatively and coherently with massive data sets become increasingly accessible, sophisticated, and easy to employ. In light of this, *Peopling the North American City* offers a powerful and timely roadmap to the field of how important it is, while engaged in a project built around massive quantities of data, to remain mindful of all the subtleties and incongruities of the human experience. By striking this balance, Olson and Thornton have provided us with an incredibly nuanced and sophisticated take on the impact that the migration experience had on both the migrant and the urban spaces that they passed through, settled in, and adapted to suit their needs.

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PORTER, David – *Eyes to the South: French Anarchists and Algeria*. Oakland CA: AK Press, 2011. Pp. 582.

David Porter's *Eyes to the South* is a dense, detailed tome on a controversial subject. In the past decade, the Algerian War of 1954-1962 has become a highly debated topic both

in and outside of academia, mostly as a result of previously classified archives becoming available. Porter brings a new, hitherto unexplored perspective on the views that French anarchists have held on Algerian politics and society from 1954 to the present. According to the author, such a study not only sheds light on Algerian history, but also provides a thorough overview of the ideological dilemmas that the international anarchist movement has had to face in the last sixty years (p. 493). Among those challenges, questions related to the “liberatory” potential of violence, to female emancipation, to the role of national liberation movements in the transition to more decentralized socioeconomic and political structures, and to the place of “Western-type ‘anarchism’” in *non-Western countries* (for lack of a better phrase) have loomed large (p.495).

After a brief section on pre-Second World War Algeria, Porter analyses the roles played by various prominent French anarchists (or quasi-anarchists, like Albert Camus) in generating discussions on the possibilities offered by the Algerian War. The book follows a chronological order. Each chapter includes a section focusing on Algerian socio-political events at a given time, accompanied by an analysis of the French anarchists’ perspective on said events as well as on related debates such as the use of violence or the issue of the headscarf in French public schools. In the course of his analysis, Porter emphasises the growing disconnect between the French anarchists’ hopes for a freer Algerian society and, on the other hand, the increasing ossification of a cynical dictatorship. In that regard, the author brilliantly describes the military-backed regime’s efforts to strengthen its authority by the means of divide-and-rule methods and, for the past twenty-five years, its artificial alliances with lackey parties and some Islamist groups.

Conceptually and structurally, *Eyes to the South* resembles a distorting mirror. Although Porter does not resort to that particular metaphor, it seems that the majority of French anarchists analysed Algerian politics through the lens of their own theoretical concepts and did not really focus their attention on the realities on the ground. As the country gradually sank into dictatorship during the Ben Bella and Boumédiène eras (1962-65 and 1965-78, respectively) and grew more conservative under Chadli and Bouteflika (1978 to the present), the debates concerning Algeria among French anarchists tended to revolve around issues more closely related to French politics or to the anarchist movement at large, such as self-management projects or the Berber Spring in the 1980s. Thus, Porter’s book can be understood as a twofold critical analysis of Algeria’s post-1962 failed democratisation and of the French anarchists’ unsuccessful attempts at overcoming the dilemmas inherent to their own ideas.

Porter devotes a substantial part of the second half of his book to Kabylia, a region located in the north of Algeria, in areas immediately to the east of Algiers province. The Kabyles, as Berbers, have held a special place in Algeria in that their language and culture differ significantly from those of the Arabs. Kabylia’s traditional structures, which have placed much emphasis on municipal power, did not fail to draw the attention of anarchist thinkers and activists. Many of the latter saw similarities between their plans to develop workers’ and peasants’ cooperatives and self-management programmes on the one hand, and Kabylia’s socioeconomic and political traditions on the other. The various political protests that have taken place over the last two decades, most notably during the April 1980 Berber Spring uprising and in 2001, contributed to kindle the interest of

French anarchists in Algerian politics. Nevertheless, only some of the Kabylean protesters' ideas converged with those of the anarchists. Indeed, some of the protesters' demands called for a return to some traditional values that clashed with the anarchists' attachment to the idea of progress. In and of itself, the French anarchists' interpretation of what could be termed the *Kabylean exception* deserves a study in its own right.

This research project must have been a daunting one, given that many archives related to the topic are still inaccessible to historians. Unsurprisingly, Porter did not resort to many archival sources, but rather focused on anarchist periodicals, correspondences and oral interviews. Overall, Porter is successful in describing the challenges faced by the French anarchists in their attempts to come up with a consistent stance on Algerian politics and society. By simultaneously describing the rise of the military dictatorship and that of Islamist organisations in Algeria, as well as the rivalries that pitted various anarchist groups in France against each other, Porter skilfully managed to combine two books into one. As a deep, intricate study of Algerian politics from 1954 to the present, as well as a general reflection on the past and future of the French anarchist movement, *Eyes to the South* is a provocative and original work.

That said, *Eyes to the South* suffers from some methodological and structural shortcomings. While Porter succeeded in overcoming the challenges posed by the inaccessibility of many archival collections by using interviews and periodicals as his main sources, a survey, even minimal, of the Archives of the Prefecture of Police in Paris (as well as some police reports in the Hérault and Rhône departmental archives) would have provided an additional dimension to his study of French anarchist groups and movements.

In addition, the book is structurally scattered and often repetitive. While the author's choice to follow a strictly chronological approach should have resolved such issues, the multinational nature of the study led him to engage in frequent back-and-forth between France and Algeria and to reiterate already mentioned facts. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of interviews and Porter's comments may confuse readers. Indeed, it is often unclear whether Porter is citing excerpts from interviews, paraphrasing them, or stating his own opinion on a given issue.

Finally, an additional chapter on the history of French anarchism might have helped lay readers understand the nature and evolution of the anarchist movement in that country. Such a chapter also would have been useful for presenting an ideology that is all too often incorrectly used as a synonym for "chaos". Although Porter occasionally mentions Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon and other thinkers, he does not explain how their ideas influenced postwar anarchists or Algerian opposition movements.

Eyes to the South is a book worth reading as it offers a good overview of the history of the French anarchist movement and Algerian politics from 1954 to the present. Although Porter's book is a precocious and courageous attempt to make sense of contemporary Algerian history, it only partially does justice to the topic. While more studies should be done on the 1980s and 1990s in Algeria, not enough sources and elements are currently at hand in order to fully comprehend what happened in that country in the last three decades.

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